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others olive and dusky, with dark frizzled hair, might be members of aristocratic Florentine families. One, trying on a suit of fluted and gilded armor, is fatigued, and with a bored expression on his face is stretching his arms: a second twists his head to catch a back view of the fastening of his greaves, which a stooping artificer has strapped on to his leg; another, supporting himself with outstretched hand against a pillar, bends backward to feel that the spur on his raised foot is securely fixed to his heel. Through the great central gateway is seen a knight in his panoply, mounted on a caparisoned charger. Other figures descending or ascending the steps from the gateway to the yard, link together, as it were, the left and right sections of the chief figure composition. The right section comprises nobles examining arms, such as swords and ivory-handled steel cross-bows, or stirrups and arbalets. A young noble glances down the length of a Ferrara blade; a second and third, bending the points of their swords on the ground, test the spring of the steel; another signor is the centre of a little knot of men scrutinizing hilts and handles. Interspersed are friends who have accompanied the buyers, seemingly giving approval of purchases, or commenting upon defects of workmanship. To the front is a crouching smith, who has strewed at the feet of customers an armful of weapons. Further, on the right, cross-bows are being inspected by connoisseurs of accuracy and sighting and weight of pull.

The variety of types of men, young and old, effeminate and brawny, of expressions ingenuous and crafty, of attitudes hasty and leisurely, is a source of pleasure without fatigue. The dignity of the composition is nowhere marred by rude movements, and a balance of light and shade is maintained with valuable effect. A tendency to that graceful lengthening of limb which distinguished Greek sculpture of the period of Lysippus may be detected in the figure drawing. The coloring is brilliant and voluptuous, reminding the spectator at one time of brightness seen in monumental paintings by early Tuscan painters, such as Benozzo Gozzoli and Sandro Botticelli; at another, of the richness to be found in those of later Venetian painters like Paul Veronese. There can be little difference of opinion that the work is, perhaps, the most important hitherto executed by Sir F. Leighton.

The work is stated to be executed in the process called spirit fresco, invented by Mr. T. Gambier Parry, and employed by him in his well-known and beautiful decorative work in the St. Andrew's Chapel of Gloucester Cathedral.

THE MERITS OF RUGS.

THE large pieces of furniture that in all rooms stand against the wall—the sofas, the pianofortes, the side-boards, the book-cases, the bedsteads, the wardrobes, the washstands, the bureaux—do not need any carpet under them; the carpet that is put under them stands for so much wasted money, and yet we go on putting down yards of carpet where it is never seen, where the dust collects and is only attacked in weekly sweepings, and where it keeps a sort of color, while the rest changes color and fades. Let any one give a rug a fair trial, and observe for himself how much less dust will be made in the room, how much more easily the room is kept clean, and how much more manageable the furniture is when the weekly sweeping or the daily dusting has to be got through. In no case should any of the large pieces of furniture rest upon the rug; for it ought to be an every-day or at least an any-day matter to turn it up and brush underneath it, or roll it up and carry it out to be shaken or swept.

It is advisable to buy a good rug, large enough to cover all the floor you wish to cover, even if it strain your purse a little; for a good rug will last a lifetime,

and, indeed, some rugs are well on their way to last a second lifetime. The best Turkey, Persian, and Indian rugs are made by hand, of pure wool, and are so thick that if a hot coal fall on one of them, the charred portion, which, in the case of a Brussels carpet, could never be effaced, will disappear in a few days' wear. After much using a good Eastern rug, walking on the best Brussels carpet feels like walking on the wooden floor. To an artistic eye, an Eastern rug that is handsome to begin with grows handsomer with time and use, and even one that was a little staring and pretentious at first, gets toned down and subdued by being long walked over, just as if it were a human being. The gain of employing good rugs is so considerable in health and cleanliness alone, that the time must come when they will be "your only wear."

THE MORAL INFLUENCE OF ART.

THE idea of cultivating taste as a moral duty may seem odd to some persons, but an admirable homily on

be, a cheerful, happy habitation, to which the absent members of a family may look with love, and to which the wanderer will always return with joy, we must have it not only clean, for cleanliness is next to godliness, and wholesome, which is another way of saying holy, but also beautiful. Refinement cannot go with sordidness and ugliness. We have decorated our churches sometimes perhaps a little too much. And it is surely time we turned to that second church, the temple in which even the old heathen placed a family altar, and learned to give our homes a little more of the beauty which comes of order and purity. Money is not what we most require for such a purpose. A pleasant and lovely home need not be expensive. To make a house beautiful we do not require gilding and carving, marble and bronze, but we do want a little taste, and perhaps a little trouble. Simplicity is not incompatible with art, even high art. It is, indeed, as we are so often taught by the art of the Greeks, and the scarcely less perfect art of the thirteenth century, an element in true beauty, and no one can think a room less pleasant because it is furnished with studied plainness.

A pretty and pleasant house, whether in city or country, is a centre of life radiating into other houses. If a house shows signs of being cared for and well treated, other houses soon begin to look like it. Art is very infectious in such things. Taste spreads with wonderful rapidity. Thirty years ago, if you asked schoolboys or young ladies about their knowledge of architecture, they would probably have repeated the names of the five classical orders, and there would have begun and ended their information. Now every church, almost every school, in our land shows signs of the knowledge and taste in Gothic and Elizabethan art of young curates and rectors' daughters. It is high time something of the kind should spread to our dwelling-houses. How many young ladies now spend their time making minute water-color sketches while their father has to bring in a house-painter to "do up" a sitting-room. Yet there is no reason why a young lady should not paint and decorate a door as easily as she paints a landscape or a fisherman's family. If the complete decoration of a room would be too much, all the details, not only the carving of mouldings and the coloring of panels, but even the arrangement of a tile pattern and the design of a window leading, might be done at home.

One house in which the inmates set themselves from their first coming to do nothing except in good taste would soon become a centre of civilization in a country district. Nothing will keep the boys at home of an evening more certainly than a little art, whether music or painting. The sons of a family in moments of leisure could carve a chimney-piece which would

be a credit to the country at large. The trouble spent in learning a quartet would be perhaps just as well, certainly no worse, spent in learning to paint a motto over the door. It requires no greater exertion to make an embroidered curtain or portière than to make a dozen "tidies." What is chiefly wanted for such ambitious efforts is a little taste and knowledge, and the schools of art all through the country might supply both if they would. So far they have done very little for the improvement of home art. Perhaps the school water-colors are a little less hard and impossible. Perhaps a few students have learned enough figure drawing not to make the men and women in their sketches look so like jointed dolls. But very little has yet been done to give people rules how to draw and stencil a diaper all over a bedroom wall, how to choose two delicate colors for the panels of a cupboard, or how to make a plaster-work pattern for the drawing-room ceiling.

To prove that this is not expecting too much, one has only to point to cases like that one at Lambeth, in which a school of art, becoming connected with the



"THE HUNTRESS DIANA" AT THE CHATEAU D'ANET. BY JEAN GOUJON.

DRAWN BY MAILLART AFTER THE MARBLE NOW IN THE LOUVRE.

the subject by that clever English writer, Mr. W. J. Loftie, puts forth the arguments in support of it in a very striking manner. If there be "sermons in stones," how much more in an entire edifice! But let Mr. Loftie speak for himself:

Strangely enough, in the minds of most of us, music enters largely into the idea we form of the happiness of heaven. But why do we exclude all other kinds of art? And if we look on the home here as the prototype of the home hereafter, we may see reasons for making it, as a sacred thing, beautiful and pleasant, as, indeed, we have no hesitation about making our churches. If we follow Bishop Butler in speaking of this life as a state of probation, and if we allow that home life is the highest "ideal type of the life in heavenly mansions," we find ourselves forced to go a little further, and to contemplate our own houses, our firesides, our sitting-rooms, our surroundings in the house, or, in a word, all those things which go to make up our notions of home, with a kind of moral and even a religious reverence. To make home what it should